

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**  
**March 2, 2004**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Lostrom called the meeting of the Medina Planning Commission to order at 7:05 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present were Brog, Greenspoon, Jordan, Lostrom, and VC Nelson. PC members Lawrence and Price were absent and excused. Staff members present were Planning Director (PD) Gellings, and Recording Secretary Carol Wedlund.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

PD Gellings stated at the last PC meeting there had been discussion that the application instructions for construction mitigation plan submittals were leading to confusion on the part of applicants. Staff had revised those instructions, in an effort to guide applicants to create more readable and consistently formatted plan documents. This applied to both Levels I and II.

**MEETING MINUTES**

PC Brog moved, seconded by VC Nelson, to approve the minutes of February 3, 2004 and the motion carried unanimously.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

Audience members were invited to address any non-agenda items.

**Paul Saad, 7644 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street**, voiced concern about garbage and the trailer in front of City Hall, and requested that the PC work toward a solution to make Medina look better.

**Charles Davidson, 7757 NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street**, stated the city would not achieve any advantage by having buses exiting onto Overlake Drive West in an effort to relieve traffic congestion. He emphasized whenever traffic converged at the same time there would be a delay. Mr. Davidson was of the opinion the choke point was the Medina Chevron intersection. He suggested a traffic light in operation at that intersection from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. to reduce the delay.

**Public Hearing—School Zoning Regulations**--Chair Lostrom referred to the objective statements developed by the Council in the PC packet. Next to each objective statement was a summary of regulations currently in existence with a connection to each objective. The Council had requested the PC to review their adopted objective statements for revising school development regulations, hold a public hearing and develop a recommendation for specific code revisions to be forwarded to them for their March 8, 2004 meeting. Chair Lostrom also noted deliberations during this meeting would pertain to all Medina schools. He pointed out the Community Meeting flyer regarding the new Medina Elementary School project on March 3, 2004 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the school gym, and encouraged community attendance. Chair Lostrom also indicated **Mr. Davidson's** statement about the flow of traffic would be appreciated at that forum.

Chair Lostrom opened the public hearing.

**Paul Saad, 7644 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street**, was concerned about the school building mass, and referred to the summary of the current regulations in the PC packet. He saw no relationship between height and massing pertaining to the zone in which the school would be built. Mr. Saad recommended since the school property was in the R-16 zone, it should comply with Code regulations governing height and massing for that zone. Any school built in any zone should follow the height limits for that zone, even though setbacks might be different. He suggested the PC start with Code setbacks within each zone, which could be adjusted, depending upon how the Council perceived them. He felt the school should be held to the same height limitations as other structures within the R-16 zone.

**Ron Santi, 7842 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street**, distributed three e-mails from him pertaining to the proposed school. He requested that the city do everything necessary to ensure this project was done correctly the first time, with acute sensitivity to neighbors and traffic flow. He noted this school would be built to last for 50 years. Therefore, it should be better buffered as a semblance of normalcy for adjacent neighbors. Because Medina was a residential city and the school was surrounded by homes, the city and the architects should be sensitive to the needs of its residents.

**Curt Ghan, 7744 Overlake Drive West**, stated the residential buffer zone was reasonable and should be maintained. He did not think the landscaping screen height had been addressed in PD Gellings' memo to the PC. Mr. Ghan suggested the school entry should be more than a "big visual barrier".

**Victor Melfi, 7746 Overlake Drive West**, distributed a petition signed by 11 property owners adjacent to the school on Overlake Drive West regarding the traffic circulation issue on that street. He emphasized those adjacent property owners felt strongly the proposed traffic circulation plan was not consistent with objectives of safety. It was not clear to him how routing buses to Overlake would improve safety, as it was a narrow, heavily treed road. Unlike NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Overlake had not been designed to accommodate much traffic. He predicted if buses were routed to Overlake, it would no longer be a safe, dedicated route for walkers. Further, such action would create another area for additional police patrol. He suggested the PC think about multiple entry points aside from Overlake Drive West, and to consider alternative traffic strategies that would not cause a conflict.

As a resident who lived next to Medina Elementary, **Kay Williams, 7749 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street**, stated vehicles queued on the street immediately before the start and end of each school day. She emphasized sufficient parking was needed so it was not hazardous for children walking to school.

Chair Lostrom closed the public hearing.

PD Gellings elaborated on each objective statement developed by the Council and the corresponding summary of current regulations. He explained the zoning for each of Medina's schools fell into an underlying zone. The only time the zoning code was triggered for schools was through school projects or alterations in which the city had granted a Special Use Permit (SUP). He indicated the key was to apply the criteria evenly for all Medina schools. He recommended variances from any zoning regulations or special use criteria pertaining to schools could be submitted to the Council. At the election of the applicant, variance requests could be combined with an application for a special use permit and considered at the same hearing. The Council could use the same criteria as were set forth in the Zoning Code for general land use variances. Chair Lostrom initiated PC discussion of the issues developed by the Council, resulting in the following recommendations:

Compatibility—Chair Lostrom suggested, and the PC agreed by common consent, the school design, operation and all elements should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

School facilities and grounds must be compatible with the content of the Comprehensive Plan for the city and with any neighborhood planning goals that are adopted by the City.

School/Residential Buffer—PD Gellings suggested the PC could obtain a better result by allowing the Council to use their discretion regarding how the landscape screening design and residential buffer met the needs of the neighborhood character, rather than relying on the 25-foot landscape screen.

Setbacks--All parts of any building shall be set back 40 feet from any property line except that where the adjoining property is zoned for residential use, the setback shall be 60 feet.

Landscaping—Permit applications must contain a design for a landscaping buffer upon each of the site's property lines which adequately mitigates visual and noise impacts of the school on surrounding residences. The design shall detail the location and species of proposed trees and vegetation. The design shall include use of year-round foliage patterns where appropriate. Lines of sight necessary for safe school operation shall be considered in the landscaping plan. The landscaping plan shall accomplish aesthetic goals while minimizing impacts to safety-required lines of sight.

Emergency Preparedness Functions Center—PD Gellings noted no regulations currently allowed the city to require the school district to include an Emergency Preparedness Center. He explained the Council's intent had been to require one on the school property. Both Chair Lostrom and VC Nelson suggested the PC recommend the school district prepare a plan and submit it to the city as part of the SUP process for review and comment, which the PC accepted by common consent.

An Emergency preparedness plan developed in coordination with the Medina Police Department shall be required. The plan should identify an emergency preparedness functions center on the proposed floor plans for the school. Such a facility should be oriented to the management of emergencies that directly impact the school. Emergencies to be planned for should include natural or man-made events that cause a crisis situation for a significant portion of the students and staff.

Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation—Chair Lostrom stated the current code did not speak to traffic circulation on school sites. PD Gellings added the Council was concerned with maximizing safety and efficiency with circulation and pedestrians. It was suggested the school district should alter their policy to encourage bus riding by students,

which would lessen vehicular traffic and increase safety for children walking to school. They also discussed the hazards of vehicle queues when students were dropped off in the morning and picked up at the end of the school day. The PC recommended that the Council to review and approve the vehicle and pedestrian plans for the school project as part of the application process. They also suggested the circulation plan include school bus loading and unloading operations, deliveries and parking management.

The application shall include a pedestrian and vehicular circulation plan. The circulation plan shall emphasize safety and efficiency in the management of typical school-generated walking and traffic. The circulation plan must include school bus loading and unloading operations, deliveries and parking management.

Lighting/Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design—PD Gellings recommended including mitigation of crime prevention as a consideration in the landscaping design and in the architectural design.

Lighting--With due consideration for safety concerns, the application shall include a lighting plan which establishes an overall lighting level that is compatible with a single-family neighborhood.

Safety—The layout of buildings and the lighting design shall not create dead-end paths or concealment potential.

Size of Parking Facility—PD Gellings stated the Code contained a standard setting a minimum parking area with a formula. Since the resulting minimum was approximately one-third the size of the existing parking lot, he suggested eliminating that Code standard. Instead, a special use criterion should be established to require the application to provide an adequate amount of parking for school operations. This criterion should allow for consideration of the parking demand generated by after-hours meetings and special events regularly held on the school grounds. It was suggested Grass Crete be used for overflow parking. It was also recommended that PWD Jahn review the submittal for on site parking stalls. A PC member stated the school district should plan for overflow parking.. The PC decided the specific minimum parking area with a formula should be removed. It was also pointed out everyone was entitled to use street spaces in designated areas that allowed on-street parking.

The proposal shall include an adequate number of parking spaces taking into consideration the requirements of buses, staff, parents, deliveries and school-sponsored events.

Building Height/Massing—Chair Lostrom stated a resident had pointed out the method of measuring height for a school may be different than for the rest of the community. He noted the Code currently set a maximum building height of 35 feet measured from the highest point of the finished grade at the building wall. He was of the opinion the current wording created a loophole for someone to mass up earth, measure from the highest point, and build a tall building. PD Gellings indicated that loophole had been closed in other sections of the Code, but not with respect to the issue at hand. He suggested inserting the words, "original or finished grade, whichever is lower". Chair Lostrom requested that the Council take the Comprehensive Plan into account during their deliberations. He recommended that the height be counterbalanced with setbacks. VC Nelson stated inserting "original or finished grade, whichever is lower" resulted in a plane that followed the contour 35 feet above the original grade, or if the school district chose to dig down, the finished grade. This suggestion met with PC consensus. The PC also agreed upon a recommended formula for the building façade that was not too boxy, would meet the scale of the neighborhood and was modulated to reduce mass on the residentially developed side within the first 20 feet of building envelope on that side.

Height—The height at any point of any building or structure shall not exceed 35 feet measured vertically from the original or finished grade, whichever is lower.

Massing—In addition to the maximum building height restriction above, the design of the building shall minimize the amount of three dimensional bulk existing in the first 20 feet of the building on all sides of the building that adjoin residential-use properties. This minimization of bulk shall be accomplished through pitched roofs, step-backs or other architectural design techniques that reduce the perceived height of the building and eliminate flat facades facing residential properties.

Signs/Kiosks—PD Gellings stated the Code currently contained several restrictions on signs and prohibited kiosks on a school site. The restrictions included a maximum of one sign, prohibition of sign lighting, and height and area maximums. He noted up to five temporary signs were currently allowed on school property with the City Manager's permission. Chair Lostrom stated the current sign ordinance covered the bases adequately for schools, and he saw no reason to change it. VC Nelson gave examples of other schools within the school district that used reader board

signs for communicating. The PC agreed by common consent to recommend a new special use criterion which would permit signs to be non-conforming as long as they were interior to the site and not visible off-site.

Signs that are visible from the outside of the structures are subject to the restrictions contained in MMC Chapter 17.80. Signs that are not visible from adjoining properties or public streets shall be described in the application.

PC Jordan moved, seconded by VC Nelson, to recommend the above school Code revisions to the Council, which met with unanimous approval.

#### **DISCUSSION**

**Side Yard Setbacks**—PD Gellings relayed the Council had considered side yard setbacks at two different meetings, and had recommended a revised problem statement be drafted broadening the scope of the PC's recommendation on side yard setback changes. He gave a case study as an example of the problems encountered by a small lot owner who could not build a home as large as the existing nonconforming house due to its having been built before that section of the Code was drafted. VC Nelson asked that private lanes also be addressed in the revised problem statement. The PC requested PD Gellings to furnish some examples of the typical problems encountered by lot owners, and agreed to work on this issue during their April meeting.

PC Brog moved, seconded by PC Jordan, to adjourn at 10:06 p.m., and the motion carried unanimously.

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Caroll P. Wedlund  
Recording Secretary